

Testimony in Support of H.B. No. 6781 (RAISED) AN ACT ADDRESSING HOUSING AFFORDABILITY FOR RESIDENTS IN THE STATE, seeking Eviction Records Reform.

Good morning, my name is Thomas Zeffiro, I am a staff attorney in the housing unit at Greater Hartford Legal Aid (GHLA). My main goal as an attorney in the housing unit is to prevent my clients from being evicted from their homes, and if that's not going to be possible in a given case, buy them as much time as possible so they can find a suitable, alternative living space for them and their family. A disproportionate amount of our clients at GHLA, and tenants in general facing evictions, are African American and female. This, combined with the current state of the rental market and the typically time-sensitive nature of their housing search, puts many tenants on their back foot before they even begin applying. As a result, I urge that you pass H.B, No. 6781, specifically with the substitute language in Section 11 proposes by the legal services organizations via testimony. It is a thoughtful and necessary way to give disadvantaged tenants a fighting chance in the application process, who are bogged down by systematic problems.

I helped research other states' policies and laws regarding eviction records reform, in anticipation of introducing a separate bill on this issue. That research is still relevant here, as legal services is looking to amend the language of Section 11 of this bill. According to the research I performed, about half of the states in the country have some kind of law or proposed law that works to suppress tenant's old evictions, and that number is rising. California automatically seals any case that does not result in a judgment for the landlord. AB 2819. Oregon provides for mandatory expungement if the eviction case was dismissed, the parties settled and the tenant complied with all terms of the settlement agreement, or the tenant was evicted, five years have passed, and all rental debt has been paid. SB 873. Utah passed a bill allowing for

automatic expungement if the entire case was dismissed, there is no appeal pending for the case, and at least three years have passed from the day on which the eviction was filed. Utah Code, Title 78B, Chapter 6, Part 8a.

I ask that Connecticut follow suit and take affirmative action in support of tenants securing housing, by going a step further than what is currently in the bill. By further limiting access to tenant's eviction data on the judicial website, and restricting record sharing for commercial purposes, the root problem for tenants with eviction records will be addressed at the source, rather than patching the leak.

Thank you.

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